

ROSWELL FIELD OFFICE
ROSWELL, New Mexico

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
NM-060-2001 -0079

**FACILITIES FOR
THE
FORT STANTON HORSE TRAILS
PARKING LOT
AND
BILLY THE KID SCENIC BYWAY
FORT STANTON AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

PREPARED BY _____
PAUL T. HAPPEL

DATE

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

On April 10, 1989, a decision record for environmental assessment Number NM-066-89-18 was signed, to construct a parking lot and trail at Fort Stanton. The location falls within the un-surveyed portion of the Fort Stanton Military Reservation, New Mexico Prime Meridian. The location of the area is in T9S., Range 15E., 4,900 feet from the intersection of U.S. Highway 380 and immediately east of State Highway 220 (previously known as State Highway 214) (see attached map). In 1997, the Fort Stanton Area was designated the Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (RMP). The management goals of the ACEC is to protect the biological, archaeological and scenic qualities of Fort Stanton, while providing for quality recreation opportunity.

B. Purpose and Need For The Proposed Action

Recreation within the area has expanded to the point where a comfort station (toilet) and trash facilities would be needed to facilitate the public recreating within the area. The comfort station would also facilitate sanitary facilities for visitors to public lands and along the Billy the Kid Scenic Byway. A kiosk would be placed adjacent to the toilet to facilitate interpretation for the 26,000 acre ACEC and the Billy the Kid Scenic Byway. The fence around the parking lot will eventually be replaced with an approved recreation fence instead of the existing barbed wire fence that is currently in place.

C. Conformance with Land Use Planning

The Proposed action is consistent with Bureau Policy and guidance as well as actions analyzed in the Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision of October 1997 (RMP).

D. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

Other pertinent statutes affecting the proposed action include:

Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976, as amended;
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (36 CFR 800);
Clean Air Act (CAA) as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401);
Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 300f);
Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1977 (33 U.S.C)1251;
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6901);

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Description of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to construct a self-contained vault toilet, that will be pumped when necessary. Effluent will be pumped from the vault and trucked to a state approved disposal facility. Trash facilities will be sited next to the toilet and will be animal proof. An interpretive kiosk will be constructed and placed in the vicinity of the toilet. The interpretive kiosk will interpret the ACEC, the trail system and the Billy the Kid Scenic Byway. The facilities would be placed on the north east portion of the parking lot adjacent to the graveled portion of the parking lot. Concrete walkways with a pitch less than one foot in twenty feet and 60 inches wide would facilitate access to the facilities. All facilities would be constructed to accessible standards under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended. The existing barbed wire fence surrounding the parking lot will be replaced with a approved recreation fence.

B. Alternatives To The Proposed Action

1. **Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative):** The No Action alternative would be to not allow the facilities to be constructed and not replace the fence.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. General Setting

The Fort Stanton ACEC is comprised of approximately 26,000 acres of public lands. Approximately 24,000 acres are controlled by the Bureau of Land Management and approximately 2,000 acres is managed by the State of New Mexico. State owned historic Fort Stanton exist within the middle of the property. Billy the Kid Scenic Byway uses U.S. Highway 380 and State highway 220 as part of the scenic byway. The existing horse trails parking lot has been in place since 1989 and is maintained on an annual basis.

B. Affected Resources/Critical Elements

The following critical elements have been evaluated and are either not present or are not affected by the Proposed Action or the alternative in this assessment: Air Quality, Farmland - Prime or Unique, Flood Plains, Native American Religious Concerns, Wastes-Hazardous or Solid, Wetlands/Riparian Zone, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Threatened and Endangered Species, and Water Quality - (Drinking/Ground). Low income or Minority populations or communities will not be affected by the proposed action.

1. Geology

Geologic formations occurring within the area are sandstone/limestone San Andres formation with occasional igneous dikes comprised of seven Tertiary rocks types.

2. Soils

Soil types present at the site are Cumulic Haplustolls, Decon Loam, Hightower-Oro Grande complex and Manzano.

3. Topography

The topography of the parking lot is level with a slight slope to the east. Trails leading from the parking lot are over rolling country.

4. Water Quality

The Proposed Action area forms part of a region-wide watershed pattern of upland foothills that contribute runoff to the Rio Bonito. The Parking lot itself has a gravel surface.

5. Climate

Temperatures vary from an average of 90 degrees F in the summer to 20 degrees F in the winter months. Precipitation averages 16.1 inches annually. The area is considered semi arid as the evaporation exceeds the precipitation.

6. Wildlife

Wildlife species inhabiting the area include mule deer, elk, coyote, pronghorn antelope, rabbit, racon, skunk, bobcat, occasional cougars, bears, and various small rodents and reptiles. Common bird species observed include raptors, killdeer, mallard, bufflehead, mourning dove, scaled quail, and sparrows.

7. Wilderness

There is no designated wilderness or Wilderness study areas within the area.

8. Livestock

Livestock have not grazed Fort Stanton ACEC in six years. Grazing, Livestock such as cows will be excluded from the interior of the parking lot by the exterior fence.

9. Recreation.

The facilities within the parking lot will add to the visitor enjoyment of the area and will fulfill the health and safety requirements of this portion of the area.

10. Vegetation.

There will be minimal change in the vegetation around the parking lot. Minimal Vegetation will be lost at the facilities because of the foot print of the facility and the areas covered by concrete sidewalks.

11. Karst.

Although the area is in a high karst environment, no known caves reside within the parking lot area. There are no significant caves with the area of Proposed Action.

12. Nonnative/Invasive Species.

Two species of Noxious weeds are known to occur within five miles of the proposed area. They are musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) and dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria genistifolia* ssp. *dalmatica*). Other known noxious weeds in the Fort Stanton area are teasel and poison hemlock; however these are generally associated with riparian areas. Musk thistle is spread by seed and is a biennial. It spreads rapidly, forming extremely dense stands which crowd out desirable forage vegetation. Dalmation toadflax is a perennial spreading by seed and underground root stalks. It is aggressive and crowds out other desirable native vegetation. An extensive and deep root system along with a waxy leaf

make this plant difficult to control. Vehicles will carry some noxious weeds into the parking lot. Because of the new facilities and the number of events using the parking lot, some weeds will be killed by the traffic within the parking lot. An approved herbicide will be used to spot kill weeds within and on the sides of the parking lot. Herbicides will be applied as per the restrictions or specifications outlined in appendix 9, Treating vegetation with herbicides, Roswell RMP 1997.

13. Threatened and Endangered Species

The area has been previously inventoried for T&E Species under the environmental assessment mentioned above.

14. Cultural Resources

The area has been previously inventoried for cultural Resources under the environmental assessment mentioned above.

IV ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Impacts Of The Proposed Action

Following are critical elements and other resources that may be impacted by the Proposed Action.

Critical Elements

1. Cultural Resources

During the excavation for the vault toilet the area will be monitored for cultural resources. If cultural resources are found during the excavation the operator will stop immediately and contact the BLM Roswell Field Office Archaeologist.

2. Threatened and Endangered Species

The parking lot has been inventoried previously and no T&E Species have been found.

3. Water Quality

Observations conducted within the Proposed Action area show no dramatic erosion and arroyos do not appear to be unusually full of sediment. The gravel surface of the parking and the concrete sidewalks should lessen the silt load to the surrounding environment.

OTHER KNOWN RESOURCES

1. Karst

No Karst or Cave Resources are located in the proposed action area.

2. Soils

Soils will not be affected by the proposed action.

3. Vegetation

An area 25' X 25' will be disturbed and vegetation will be removed by the action of digging the pit for the vault toilet. The top soil around the disturbed area will not be effected. Some vegetation will be crushed or obliterated by the action of the equipment excavating the hole for the vault and placing the toilet, Kiosk and sidewalks in place. The vegetation should regrow within one year's growing season.

4. Noxious and Invasive Species

Vehicles which are carrying a seed source are a major transportation of noxious weed seeds. Because of the heavy use within the parking lot, weeds will be killed by the action of vehicle using the parking lot for recreation and during events. Because vehicles will remain on the parking lot, the noxious and invasive species should be easily controlled by spraying the weeds when they germinate with an approved herbicide.

B. IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES**Relocate the Proposed Action**

Relocating the facilities to another part of the parking lot would be considered. However the proposed location for the facilities in the north east portion of the parking lot will lessen the visual impact of the facilities. The prevailing wind is from the south and any smell generated from the toilet will drift north and not over the parking lot.

No Action Alternative

This alternative denies the Proposed Action. This alternative will result in no new environmental impacts. However, a No Action alternative may reduce BLM's recreation management efforts within the ACEC. Further, the Proposed Action will add to the health and safety of the area by providing a toilet facility, trash facility and interpretive kiosk for the visiting public using Fort Stanton and the Billy the Kid Scenic Byway.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES

The surface disturbance to the lands within the parking lot will be minimal and should naturally reclaim within one years growing season.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

To prevent possible negative impacts, or loss of cultural resources, the pit dug for the vault toilet will be monitored during construction to determine if any cultural resources are present. In the event that cultural resources are discovered during the excavation, the Bureau of Land Management Roswell Field Office archaeologist will be notified immediately.

D. RESIDUAL IMPACTS

There will be little or no residual impacts from the Proposed Action.

E. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Population increases and recreation demand increases are considered the primary multipliers of cumulative resource degradation effects for the future. There will be positive effects resulting from health and safety issues of providing a toilet for visitor use within the area.

Increase in regional metropolitan populations and collateral recreation demands may also impact Fort Stanton's natural, Cultural, and recreational resources. Other southwest recreation sites, areas, parks and facilities have experienced a general increase in resource degradation within the past fifteen years. The trend is expected to continue as the public becomes more aware of the value of public lands to the nation.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**PERSONS CONSULTED**

Dan Baggao, Wildlife Biologist
Helen Miller, Rangeland Management Specialist
Howard Parman, Pubic Affairs Specialist
Irene Salas, Realty Specialist

Lester Babyak, Petroleum Engineer
Jerry Dutchover, Geologist
Pat Flanary, Archaeologist
Jim Desmond, Fire Management Officer
Jerry Ballard, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Tim Kreager, Assistant Field Manager, Resources

**VI. DECISION RECORD/FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT
IMPACT****DECISION DOCUMENT EA# NM-060-2001-0079**

I recommend that the Proposed Action, be approved as proposed. I have determined that the Proposed Action, with the mitigation measures described in this EA, will not have any significant impacts on the natural and human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

Authority of this action is the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321, es seq.), as amended.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The Proposed Action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. The Horse Trails Parking Lot was constructed in 1989 and has been continually used since that time. The addition of a toilet facility, trash facility, and interpretive kiosk will add to the visitors enjoyment of the area and improve sanitation conditions to the general area. The proposal is consistent with the Roswell Field Office Resource Management Plan of 1997 and environmental Assessment, NM-066-89-18 for the Horse Trails Parking lot and trails dated 4/10/1989.

signed by
Timothy R. Kreager
Assistant Field Manager Resources

4/11/01
Date

APPENDIX